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Sweden

Livestock and Products

PMWS Increasing in Sweden

2005

Approved by:

Margaret E. Thursland
Agricultural Counselor
U.S. Embassy Stockholm

Prepared by:

Asa Lexmon
Agricultural Specialist

Report Highlights:

Outbreaks of PWMS (Postweaning Multisystemic Wasting Syndrome) in Sweden are on the rise. Swedish farmers fear that the spread of PWMS will lead to the introduction of a parallel virus, PRRS (Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome), in Sweden. While PMWS has spread to most pig-producing countries of the world, including most of Sweden's neighbors, the disease has not been reported to date in Finland.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Stockholm [SW1]
[SW]

"New" Pig Disease in Sweden

Swedish media is currently reporting on a "new" disease threatening Swedish pigs - PMWS Postweaning Multisystemic Wasting Syndrome. This disease, which was first observed in Canada in 1991, was not found in Sweden until 2003. PMWS has spread to most pig-producing countries of the world including Sweden's neighbors: Norway, Denmark, The United Kingdom, Ireland, The Netherlands, Germany and Belgium. There have, however, been no cases of PMWS reported to date in Finland, one of Sweden's closest neighbor.

Classical PMWS normally affects piglets between 6 and 14 weeks of age. Symptoms include chronic wasting, respiratory distress, diarrhea, poor coordination and jaundice. There is no effective treatment for this virus and mortality rates are high.

PMWS has spread slowly in Sweden due mainly to the geographic isolation of hog operations, low density of animals, high animal welfare standards, transportation restrictions and a low pathogen load within the country.

PMWS Outbreaks on the Rise

Following the first Swedish PMWS case in December 2003, there have been only sporadic outbreaks, mainly in southern Sweden. In March 2004, five herds were affected. Lately, however, the number of outbreaks has increased. According to the Swedish Veterinary Institute, cases of PMWS have recently been reported at 26 Swedish farms. In addition, 20 suspected outbreaks are under investigation.

Will PMWS bring PRRS to Sweden?

The mortality rate in affected herds in Sweden has increased from 1 percent to 8-12 percent. This is quite low when compared to the normal average mortality rate of about 20 percent. This higher rate is usually attributed to a parallel virus infection - PRRS (Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome). This disease causes impairment of reproductive function in sows and respiratory disease in growing pigs. Sweden is free of PRRS. It is feared that the rise in outbreaks of PMWS, which appears to compromise the immune system, will lead to the spread of PRRS in Sweden.

PRRS is endemic in Denmark. For several years now, Sweden has tried to halt Danish plans to transport their pigs destined for the Baltics and Russia through Sweden, on the grounds that it would lead to the introduction of PRRS in Swedish herds. To the dismay of the Swedish pig industry, the Swedish Court approved the transit of Danish pigs through Sweden, citing EU regulations on free movement within the union. Transshipments of Danish pigs through Sweden have begun.